

VZCZCXRO6340  
RR RUEHDE RUEHROV RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHNR #2441/01 3020857  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 280857Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7402  
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE  
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 002441

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/E AND A/S FRAZER  
ALSO FOR PRM

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [EAID](#) [SO](#) [KE](#)  
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - REFUGEES SWELL DADAAB CAMPS

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2646

11. (SBU) Summary: The arrival of 45,000 new Somali refugees since January 2008 to the three Dadaab refugee camps in Eastern Kenya has exacerbated tensions between the local community and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over jobs, service contracts and the environmental degradation caused by the refugees. UNHCR believes local politicians are stoking the tensions and that unless UNHCR can relieve severe overcrowding in the Dadaab camps further deterioration between UNHCR and the local community could result. UNHCR is concerned about a growing intolerance to refugees by host community members and the security challenges posed by the presence of asylum seekers with ties to various Somali political groups in the camps. End Summary.

-----  
New Arrivals Exceed Available Services  
-----

12. (SBU) Originally built in the early 1990s to house 30,000 refugees each, the three Dadaab refugee camps (Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera) have, by September 2008, swelled to more than 215,000 refugees. By September 15, UNHCR reported registering 45,911 new refugees into the camps so far this year (a 25 percent overall increase in the camps since January), with the overwhelming majority of new arrivals being Somalis from South/Central Somalia. UNHCR estimates the camp's population could grow to 240,000 by the end of the year if the current rate of increase is maintained. With a maximum capacity to register 450-500 new arrivals per day, UNHCR estimates that more than 6,000 asylum seekers remain unregistered and waiting for authorization to enter the camps. New arrivals currently receive a future registration appointment date with UNHCR (currently about a one month wait), a food packet, and are put on a list for future food distributions.

13. (SBU) Because of the lack of space for new arrivals, UNHCR is unable to allocate plots for them to construct shelters and is instead directing new arrivals to locate and move in with family or clan members who are already in the camps. Non-food items (NFIs) are also in extremely short supply with only the most vulnerable new arrivals (female-headed households, families with severe medical needs, families without relatives or clan members in the camps, etc.) receiving plastic sheeting, mats and cooking utensils. UNHCR reports WFP currently has sufficient food stocks to add new arrivals to bi-weekly food distribution lists. The severe over-crowding in the camps increases the risk of transmitting contagious diseases (polio, MDR TB and measles have all been reported among the new arrivals). UNHCR is concerned that the annual cholera out-break associated with the beginning of the short rainy season in October could be especially severe this year.

-----  
Tensions Over A Fourth Camp  
-----

¶4. (SBU) In September, UNHCR reported it had reached an agreement with the Fafi district political and community leaders on 2,500 hectares for a fourth camp (Note: UNHCR had requested 10,000 hectares with the intent of constructing three additional camps). In return for the land, UNHCR agreed to build an office and house for the District Officer, to open a UNHCR office in Fafi district and to re-write their firewood collection contracts so firewood will be sought outside Fafi District. UNHCR believes word of this agreement angered Farah Maalim, the Member of Parliament (MP) of Lagadera District, with whom it had also been negotiating for additional land. Maalim has been a persistently harsh critic of UNHCR and the refugees in Dadaab (Note: UNHCR's main compound in Dadaab housing UNHCR and NGO operations and staff is located in Lagadera district, as are Ifo and Dagahaley refugee camps).

¶5. (SBU) UNHCR believes MP Maalim provoked demonstrations by about 100 local women and children outside UNHCR's Dadaab compound the week of September 29 which resulted in stones thrown at UN vehicles (WFP reported having the windshield of one vehicle was damaged) and the injury of two demonstrators by a tear gas canister police used to disperse the crowd. When UNHCR requested that a committee of community leaders be formed to discuss their concerns, UNHCR was, instead, handed a letter, which UNHCR believes

NAIROBI 00002441 002 OF 003

was written by representatives of Maalim, outlining the communities' demands: the relocation of the refugees away from Dadaab and, if that was not possible, the construction of a fence around Ifo and Dagahaley camps confining all refugees and their livestock to the camps; dismissal of all non-local Kenyan staff and replacement with "Dadaabians" by October 31; restriction of trucks over 10 metric tons from using local roads to deliver food and non-food items; implementation of an environmental audit; and, the creation of a regional development plan.

¶6. (SBU) The uncompromising tone of the letter, the demonstration of locals outside UNHCR headquarters that disrupted operations for almost one week, and Maalim's declared intention to return to Dadaab in late October with the Minister of Arid Lands has alarmed UNHCR. UNHCR is concerned that the Dadaab communities' traditional tolerance demonstrated towards refugees is being manipulated by local politicians and could deteriorate further while UNHCR is struggling to accommodate growing numbers of refugees. UNHCR fears that Maalim's stoking of community intolerance and hostility has the potential to jeopardize the delivery of relief supplies and the restrict ability of international humanitarian agencies to operate in the camps. UNHCR is also concerned that the escalation in tensions could lead to attacks on refugees and that increasingly restrictive limits on refugee movements could compound the stress refugees already experience due to overcrowded conditions.

-----  
Other Security Concerns  
-----

¶7. (SBU) UNHCR has maintained a collaborative working relationship with Government of Kenya (GOK) security and police officials. GOK officials are taking fingerprints of all new arrivals at the time of registration. GOK security officials are present in the camps and occasionally arrest refugees suspected of engaging in combatant activities inside Somalia (Note: UNHCR is able to visit detained or arrested refugees). UNHCR has told

us the GOK has is concerned that the camp's medical facilities may be treating combatants along with asylum seekers injured inside Somalia. GOK security officials are now insisting that any refugee seeking medical treatment for a war wound (gunshot or shrapnel injury) be transported and treated at Garissa hospital. GTZ, the German NGO operating the camp's medical centers, and UNHCR report that at least 19 asylum seekers had been treated for war wounds between July and September.

18. (SBU) Since the closing of the Liboi transit center earlier this year, UNHCR has not been able to screen asylum seekers other than at the Dagahaley Registration Center. The inability to screen asylum-seekers thoroughly before they enter the camp, and the lack of information about officials of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and other organizations party to the Somali conflict has led UNHCR to admit some individuals to the camps despite the security concerns posed by their presence in the camps. UNHCR currently believes at least 16 former TFG officials reside in the camp or are awaiting entry to the camp. While no threats or security incidents have emerged so far, UNHCR is concerned that any incident - such as an assassination - of a former TFG official in the camp could inflame the refugees' political sentiments and result in the politicization of the refugee population, with potentially violent results. UNHCR is considering relocating the former TFG officials to Nairobi or Kakuma to mitigate this risk. (Note: Members of Post's Somalia Unit and Military Information Support Team members met with UNHCR on October 17 to exchange information on developments inside Somalia that could impact UNHCR Dadaab operations. UNHCR has subsequently passed on the names of identified or suspected TFG officials in the camps to the Somalia Unit for any additional information that might prove useful to UNHCR in determining the individual's claim to asylum).

19. (SBU) Although UNHCR can not confirm the presence of ICU (Islamic Courts Union) members, Bud Crandell, the CARE Country Director, reports that ICU members are in the camps and recruitment is occurring. According to Crandell, members of the ICU are offering refugees a salary of \$300/month to join them and return to Somalia to fight the TFG. Religious schools teaching the basics of Islam have become more noticeable in the camps, according

NAIROBI 00002441 003 OF 003

to UNHCR. However, the schools' proliferation is due more to the lack of formal educational opportunities than to a growth in religious sentiment. UNHCR does not believe there has been any increase in more formalized madrassas within the camps.

-----  
Comment  
-----

110. (SBU) The continued influx of refugees in already overcrowded camps, host community demonstrations restricting UNHCR's operations, and the representatives of parties to the Somali conflict in the camps are compounding the stress on UNHCR, the refugees, and host communities. UNHCR recognizes there are valid reasons for Kenyan resentment toward the rapidly increasing refugee population. However, Maalim's stoking of community antagonism towards the UN and the un-compromising threats to UNHCR's efforts on behalf of the refugees, only make more difficult the search for ways to decongest the Dadaab camps. End Comment.

RANNEBERGER